for

Promoting
Older Manitobans

Manitoba
Building for the Future

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INTRODUCTION

Emergency situations such as fires, floods and severe storms can be hazardous for anyone. As a senior, you may be at additional risk. This booklet provides some suggestions to help you be more prepared for emergencies should they occur.

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

- **Know local dangers** - Become familiar with hazards common to your area, i.e., floods, tornadoes, severe winter storms, etc.

- **Know home hazards** - Learn to check for possible hazards in your home (see Home Fires section) and take all reasonable precautions. Plan an escape route from each room and ensure each is clear of obstacles. Post emergency phone numbers near your telephone.

- **First aid** - Develop your skills to respond to emergencies and accidents. Take courses in First Aid, Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), etc.

- **Emergency kit** - Have an emergency kit in your home. A list of suggested items to include in your kit is located at the back of this booklet.

- **Buddy system** - If you live alone or have disabilities, it's a good idea to have a neighbour, friend or relative to act as your "buddy." Their role is to alert you to any impending danger and to know your capabilities. You and your buddy should keep in touch regularly. You may also want to have a back-up buddy, in case your first buddy is unavailable.

- **Self-assessment** - Only you know what you can and can't do, and what your needs are. You may wish to complete the emergency list at the end of this booklet. Keep it in a safe and readily accessible place in the event of an emergency.

HOME FIRES

Whether you live in a house, apartment, condominium or other dwelling, there are several precautions you should take to prevent a fire in your home.

- Have a 10 lb. ABC class fire extinguisher in good working order, preferably in the kitchen as this is where many fires start.
- Ensure you are trained on the proper use of the fire extinguisher.
- Install smoke alarms in your home and test them regularly.
- Have your furnace or heating system checked annually by a service company.
- Keep stove surfaces free of clutter and built-up grease. Never leave cooking unattended.
- Ensure there is nothing flammable (such as clothing, curtains, furniture) close to any stove, heater or fireplace. Portable/space heaters should be kept at least one meter (3ft.) from everything.
- If you have a working fireplace, have your chimney cleaned and checked regularly.
- Clean rubbish from your attic, basement, garage and closets.

HOME FIRES

- Store gasoline and other flammable liquids in safety containers in an outside shed or garage, away from heat sources.
- Check electrical cords and plugs for appliances, lamps and other equipment to ensure they are in good condition.
- Do not connect too many appliances to a single electrical outlet or circuit.
- Never smoke in bed or when you are on medication that could make you drowsy or disoriented.
- Clean accumulated fluff from dryer regularly.
- Change your furnace filter regularly.
- Ensure you have the right size fuses for each circuit in your fuse box.
- If you have a television roof antenna, make sure it is properly grounded and can't fall across power lines.
- Plan a fire escape route from your home.
- With your family or friends, choose a location near your home to meet in case of fire or a fire drill (if you live in an apartment).
- Check with the building superintendent to find out what the evacuation and fire escape plan is for your building.

HOME FIRES

In case of fire in your home:

- In the event of a fire, leave immediately through the nearest exit. Once outside or in a safe location, call the fire department and alert neighbours.
- Before opening any door, feel to see if it is hot and look for smoke seeping around it. If you observe either, use another exit.
- If smoke begins to fill the room, stay close to the floor. The air will be more breathable there since smoke rises.
- If there is no safe exit, move to the room furthest from the fire with a window accessible from the outside. Shut the door and stay by the window. Open the window slightly or try to break a small section. If there is a phone in the room, call the fire department and alert the neighbours.
- Use a piece of clothing, whistle, flashlight or your voice to attract attention. Direct rescuers to where you are.
- If you are in an apartment building with an elevator, use the stairs to leave the building. Never use an elevator when there is a fire in the building.
- Once evacuated, do not return home until you have been told by police or fire officials that it is safe to do so.

FLOODS

Floods can occur anywhere in Manitoba, caused by various events from sewer backups and broken watermains to seasonal flooding of rivers and streams. Become familiar with the history of flooding in your area, and take the following precautions:

- Improve the drainage on your property by sloping grounds away from your house and extend downspouts three to six feet away from the house.
- Prepare plugs for basement drains and install valves to your sewage pipe to respond to sewer back-ups.
- Buy sump pumps to remove water from your basement.

When a flood warning has been issued for your area:

- Install basement drain plugs.
- Store an adequate supply of drinking water in case tap water becomes contaminated.
- Remove all chemicals from the basement and move personal belongings to upper floors.
- Install pumps, if you have them.
- Disconnect eavestroughs that drain into sewer.

FLOODS

If your home or property has been flooded:

- Turn off electrical furnace and shut off outside gas valves.
- Turn off electrical power (do not touch the switch while standing on wet surface - if necessary, use a dry piece of wood).
- Boil or purify your drinking water if you suspect it is contaminated (you can use purification tablets or a bleaching compound).
- Add 2.5 litres of disinfectant (bleach) to basement flood water every two or three days.
- Listen for local instructions on a battery-powered radio.
- Pump out water from basement as required.

AFTER THE FLOOD:

Once flood waters have receded and you have returned home, you should ensure:

- The electrical systems and furnace are professionally inspected before using;
- The water supply is tested for contamination, particularly if water source is a well; and
- Taps, plumbing fixtures, drains and all flooded areas are cleaned and disinfected.

WINTER STORMS

Winter weather conditions can become severe or hazardous with little warning. When this happens, power and heating systems can fail suddenly, endangering your home and family. Severe weather also makes driving more dangerous than usual. The following precautions and guidelines can help you prepare for such conditions.

- Become familiar with the types of winter storms common in your area.
- Blizzards are a combination of falling, drifting snow and high winds, with visibility of less than one kilometre and temperature below -10°C.
- Ice storms bring freezing rain or drizzle that coats roads, trees and hydro lines, causing dangerous driving conditions and power failures.
- Heavy snowfalls are generally more than 10 cm of snow in less than 12 hours or 15 cm in 24 hours.
- A cold wave or snap is a rapid drop in temperature of 25°C or more within 18 hours.

WINTER STORMS

AT HOME:

You should always have the following materials ready in case of possible power/heat failures:

- a battery-powered radio;
- spare batteries;
- flashlights;
- candles and matches;
- extra food;
- medical supplies and emergency kit;
- antifreeze to protect plumbing;
- a Canadian Standards Association-approved heater and extra fuel (do not store fuel in the house).

If your heating system or power fails:

- Stay calm - your home will stay warm for several hours.
- Avoid opening outside doors unnecessarily.
- Turn off all electrical appliances, if power has failed.
- Begin using your standby heating unit before the house cools down.

WINTER STORMS

If you must leave your home for an extended period of time:

- Turn off the main electrical switch.
- If pipes are in danger of freezing, turn off the main water valve, drain the line by running taps, and put antifreeze in toilet bowls, sinks and bath drains (also turn off and drain the hot water heater).
- Cover the main water valve, inlet pipe, meter or pump with a blanket or insulating material.
- Check operating manuals of major appliances for frost protection measures.
- Listen to radio for emergency instructions.

When power and heating systems have been restored:

- Check your home thoroughly before restoring power and heat.
- Warm the house to slightly above normal to allow thorough drying.
- Turn on the main water valve and close taps, beginning with lower levels.
- Fill and turn on water heater.
- Flush toilets and drain sinks and tubs to dispose of antifreeze.
- Check food for spoilage.
- Turn on main electrical switch.

WINTER STORMS

ON THE ROAD:

- The best safety precaution during severe winter weather conditions is not to travel. If you must drive, however, be prepared.
- Tune your car for winter driving (winter tires, antifreeze, oil, etc. as required) and keep the gas tank as close to full as possible, to avoid freezing.
- Tell family and friends your destination and estimated time of arrival.
- Drive on well-travelled roads.
- Listen to your car radio for weather updates.
- If weather conditions worsen, turn back, or stop at the nearest motel or at the side of the road, if necessary.
- Carry a winter survival kit.

Your winter survival kit should include:

- two coffee tins (one for a waste receptacle and the other to hold a candle for heat);
- candle (place in coffee tin and open a down-wind window for ventilation);
- matches;
- candy (jelly beans, hard candy or sugar cubes provide instant energy to maintain body heat);
- blanket or warm clothing such as snowmobile suit and boots;

WINTER STORMS

- 12-hour thermal heat packs (to warm feet, hands, etc.);
- plastic garbage bag (to keep you dry);
- signal aids (red cloth for the antenna, whistle);
- flashlight and batteries;
- tools (screwdriver, pliers, tire change equipment, etc.);
- booster cables;
- bag of sand;
- gas line antifreeze;
- ice scraper and snow brush;
- shovel; and
- tire and towing chains.

If you become stranded:

- do not panic;
- stay with your car;
- avoid exposure and over-exertion;
- ensure exhaust pipe is not blocked with snow;
- keep fresh air in car;
- run the engine sparingly for heat;
- avoid over-using headlights as they can wear down the battery;
- keep moving and exercising your arms and legs;
- do not fall asleep; and
- keep watch for searchers and other traffic.

SUMMER STORMS

In Manitoba, summer storms can happen with little warning and develop quickly into severe weather conditions. Lightning, heavy rains, hail, strong winds and tornadoes can occur during such storms. Be aware of these hazards and know what to do if a severe storm threatens your area.

There are two types of forecast alerts for summer storms:

- **Weather Watch** - conditions indicate a storm may occur in a given area.
- **Weather Warning** - a storm has developed and is moving into a specific area.

Know the difference between these two, and listen carefully to radio or television alerts when they are issued.

Precautions:

When a storm is forecast, you should take several general precautions.

- Have a battery-powered radio and flashlight on hand in case of a power failure.
- If time permits, secure shutters, doors, windows and outdoor objects such as patio furniture.

SUMMER STORMS

- Disconnect sensitive electrical appliances such as televisions, stereos, computers, etc.
- If you are caught outdoors, seek shelter away from trees, telephone poles, etc.
- Avoid travelling if a weather warning is issued for your area.

LIGHTNING:

Lightning is present in all thunderstorms and can be very dangerous. To avoid injury:

- Stay indoors, away from windows, doors, fireplaces, etc.
- Do not touch metal pipes, or use sinks, bath or other electrical conductors, including the telephone.

If you are outdoors during a thunderstorm:

- Seek shelter in a building, hollow or ditch.
- If no shelter is available, kneel on the ground, lean forward with your head lower than your back (but not touching the ground), and place your hands on your thighs.
- Stay away from metal objects such as fences, machinery, sheds, etc.
- Do not go swimming or boating.

SUMMER STORMS

If you are in a car:

- Stay inside and park away from trees.
- Avoid touching metal surfaces.

HAIL:

Hail can be extremely hazardous, and can cause extensive damage in just a few minutes. To avoid injury and property damage:

- Where possible, move property indoors.
- Shelter cars, machinery and equipment in a garage or shed.
- If caught outdoors without shelter, crouch down and protect your head and neck.

TORNADOES:

Manitoba's tornado season normally runs from May to August. Although tornadoes are most common in the southern areas of the province, they have been seen as far north as Thompson. If you sight a tornado or a tornado warning is issued for your area:

- Seek shelter in a basement or interior room away from windows.
- Take cover under solid furniture or mattresses.

SUMMER STORMS

- Do not stay in a parked car, truck or mobile home.
- If trapped outdoors, drive or walk away from the tornado's path at a right angle. If you cannot avoid the tornado, leave your vehicle and seek shelter, or lie in a ditch or a hollow.

SAFETY TIPS

Plan ahead for weather emergencies. Take the time now to choose the best shelter within your home or office. Try to choose a small interior room or stairwell, ideally with walls reinforced with pipes (such as a bathroom) or concrete (the basement) on lowest floor of the building. Make sure everyone knows where to go and what precautions to take (see 18 and 19). Also, choose a meeting place where your family can gather after a severe storm to ensure that you are all safe and accounted for.

Maintain an emergency pack with battery powered flashlight, radio, tools for emergency repair, food supplies, first aid, blankets and extra clothing. Keep your car gas tank full, in case gas stations close down after a storm. If a severe weather watch is issued, bring all livestock to shelter, secure or put away loose objects like lawn furniture, listen for weather updates and watch the skies. When a warning is issued keep calm, close all windows and doors, bring children indoors and go to your shelter.

WEATHER EVENT TABLE

Weather Event	In Building	Outside	In Vehicle/ Mobile Home
FLOODING	If house is in low lying area be prepared to move to higher ground during flood watches.	Seek shelter. Do not try to walk through flash floods.	Avoid driving through flooded areas. If caught there, watch for road washouts and avoid dips and underpasses.
LIGHTNING	Close windows and doors and keep away from windows, doors and fireplaces. Don't go outside unless it is absolutely necessary. Before the storm hits, unplug appliances including radio, television and computers and do not touch electrical items or telephones during the storm. Do not take a bath (both water and metal are electrical conductors).	Get inside vehicle or building if possible. Avoid water and objects that conduct electricity (such as a tractor, golf clubs, or a metal fence). Do not stay in open space or under tall objects (trees, poles). If no shelter is available, crouch down, feet close together with head tucked down. If in a group spread out, keeping people several yards apart. Remember, lightning victims can be revived with CPR even though there is no pulse.	Stay in vehicle with windows closed. Be wary of downed power lines that may be touching your car. You are safe in the car, but may receive a shock if you step outside. Avoid touching metal parts of vehicle. Do not drive, wait. But don't park under trees or other tall objects that may fall over in a storm.

WEATHER EVENT TABLE

Weather Event	In Building	Outside	In Vehicle/ Mobile Home
WIND/TORNADO	Stay inside with doors and windows shut. Stay away from windows, doors and exterior walls. Go to small, Interior rooms or Stairwell on lowest floor of building (bathrooms are often the best choice). If possible crouch under heavy furniture. Protect your head with cushion or mattress.	Seek shelter immediately in a building (not a car or mobile home). If no shelter is available, lie flat in a low dry spot (ravine or ditch) or under a low bridge. Keep alert for flash floods. Protect your head. As a last resort, hang on tightly to the base of a shrub or small tree.	Do not stay in vehicle or mobile home, and do not try to outrun tornado by driving, especially in populated areas. If possible, run to nearby solid structure (shelter or building). If no solid structure is nearby, lie flat in dry ditch or ravine. Keep alert for flash floods. Protect your head.
HAIL	Stay away from windows and glass doors. Be alert for signs of high winds or tornado (especially if hail is large) and follow tornado precautions if necessary.	Seek cover, face away from wind and protect your head. Be alert for signs of high winds or tornado (especially if hail is large) and follow tornado precautions if necessary).	Keep head and face away from windows. Be alert for signs of high winds or tornado (especially if hail is large) and follow tornado precautions if necessary.

IF YOU MUST EVACUATE

The following items should be included in or with your emergency kit:

- flashlight;
- battery-powered radio;
- spare batteries (for flashlight, radio and medical equipment);
- first-aid kit;
- extra suitable clothing;
- special aids equipment (walkers, hearing aids);
- essential medications;
- toiletries and other personal items (dentures, extra eyeglasses;)
- a list of any special dietary needs;
- the completed emergency list at the back of this booklet;
- personal identification cards (driver's licence, social insurance, Manitoba Health, Blue Cross or other medical insurance).

OTHER EMERGENCY INFORMATION

POISONING

If you suspect a person has come in contact with poison, follow these steps:

- Call for an ambulance immediately, if needed.
- Try to identify the poison container(s). Keep the container(s) to show the doctor, or read the information when you call the Poison Control number.
- Be sure you do not become a victim. Move away from the source of poison fumes. Get to fresh air and move the victim to fresh air.

If the poison comes in contact with the skin or eyes:

- Flood the area with cold running water for 15 minutes. Be sure to flush eyes gently.
- Remove any contaminated clothing.
- Do not use any chemical antidotes.

For further assistance contact:

Poison Control Centre

24-Hour Number 1-204-787-2591

(In Winnipeg 911)

OTHER EMERGENCY INFORMATION

EYE INJURIES

Eye injuries can be very serious. Always use caution and seek professional help as soon as possible.

Chemicals in eye:

Wash eyes immediately with large amounts of fresh cold water for at least 15 minutes.

Foreign body in eye:

Never rub eye and DO NOT try to remove embedded foreign objects.

Puncture wounds:

Puncture wounds to the eye are very serious. Cover both eyes lightly with bandages and seek help as soon as possible.

BURNS AND SCALDS

For burns or scalds caused by fire, hot solids, hot liquids or the sun, follow the guidelines below:

- Cool affected part with cold water and ice to relieve pain.
- Remove rings and bracelets before swelling begins.
- Cover with clean cloth and secure lightly with bandage.
- If burn or scald is larger than a quarter, transport the victim to the hospital for treatment.

OTHER EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- Never breathe on, cough on, or touch a burn.
- Never open blisters.
- Never tear away clothing stuck to a burn.
- Never apply medications, ointment, or greasy substances to a burned area.

Dry or liquid chemical burns:

- Brush off dry chemicals.
- Flood with running water.
- Cover with clean dressing and bandage lightly.

Electrical burns:

- Before touching victim be sure electricity is turned off.
- Cover burns with clean dressing and bandage lightly.

COLD AND HEAT EXPOSURE

Cold exposure:

Cold exposure will cause loss of body heat. Follow the guidelines below:

- Remove any wet or damp clothing.
- Wrap in sleeping bag, blankets, or warm and dry clothing.
- Warm the victim by using your own body heat.
- Light a fire for warmth, if possible.
- If the victim is conscious, give warm drinks but NO alcoholic drinks.

OTHER EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Heat Exhaustion:

The cause of heat exhaustion is excessive exposure to heat with loss of body fluids and subsequent straining of the heart and circulatory system.

Treatment:

- Move victim to a cool or shady area.
- If the victim is conscious, give fluids to drink, but NO alcohol.
- If unconscious, ensure victim's air passage is clear.

Heat Stroke:

The cause of heat stroke is a high body temperature with the inability to sweat and poor blood circulation to the brain. This condition is very serious and can cause death.

Treatment:

- Move victim to cool area.
- Decrease body temperature by sponging the body with cold water and ice.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE INFORMATION KIT

The goal of E.R.I.K. is to improve the accessibility of vital information in an emergency. It ensures seniors have a standard package of health information placed in a common location and available to paramedics and other health care providers. This program assists seniors with independent living and provides a valuable personal health safety package to seniors. It eases concerns of caregivers and helps emergency response personnel give focused service in an emergency.

E.R.I.K. contains an information brochure, a Health Information Form, a Health Care Directive Information sheet and form, an organ donation card, a donation slip, a slot to insert a business card (contact or sponsor) and a sticker for the front door of a residence. To enquire if an E.R.I.K. is available in your community, call your local community resource council (CRC). For a list of CRC, please call the Seniors Information Line at 945-6565 in Winnipeg, or toll-free 1-800-665-6565.

EMERGENCY LIST

General Information on Emergency Preparedness for Seniors

- Determine what emergencies could occur in your area.
- Meet with family or residents of senior citizen homes to discuss the dangers of fire, severe weather, flood and other emergencies.
- Discuss how to respond to each emergency that could occur.
- Discuss what to do about power outages and personal injuries.
- Draw a floor plan of your home or residence and mark two escape routes from each room.
- Learn how to turn off the water, gas and electricity at main switches.
- Know how to use home fire extinguishers.
- Post emergency telephone numbers near telephones.
- Turn on a battery-powered radio for emergency information.
- Pick one out-of-area and one local friend or relative for family members to call if you are separated by an emergency.
- Pick two meeting places: a) a place near your home in case of fire; b) a place outside your neighbourhood in case you cannot return home after the emergency.
- Keep family records in a water and fireproof container.

CHECKLIST

Prepare an Emergency Supplies Kit

- Keep a good supply of water on hand: one gallon per person per day. Store water in a sealed, unbreakable container. Replace stored water every six months.
- Have a supply of non-perishable packaged or canned food and a non-electric can opener on hand.
- Have a change of clothes, rain gear and sturdy shoes nearby.
- Be sure blankets or sleeping bags are available.
- Have a first aid kit and prescription medicines in your kit.
- Keep an extra pair of eyeglasses on hand.
- Have a battery-powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries for emergencies.
- Have credit cards, cash and traveler's cheques available.
- Keep an extra set of car keys close at hand.
- Have ready a list of family physicians, a list of important family information, the style and serial number of medical devices, such as pacemakers, stored in your emergency kit.
- See to the needs of elderly or disabled family members by keeping on hand special items for their use.

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